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ABSTRACT

The articles in this journal issue explore classroom methods for enhancing language acquisition. The titles of the articles and their authors are as follows: (1) Forests and Trees: Conservation and Reforestation" (Joyce S. Steward); (2) "Using Literature to Teach Language" (Richard D. Cureton); (3) "Language Learning through Sentence Combining" (Nicholas J. Karolides); and (4) "ERIC/RCS Report: Evaluating Language Development" (Fran Lehr). A list of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Achievement Award Winners from Wisconsin, as well as reviews of selected books for children, adolescents, and teachers are also included. (HTH)

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For English Teachers At All Levels
January, 1985 Volume 27, No. 2

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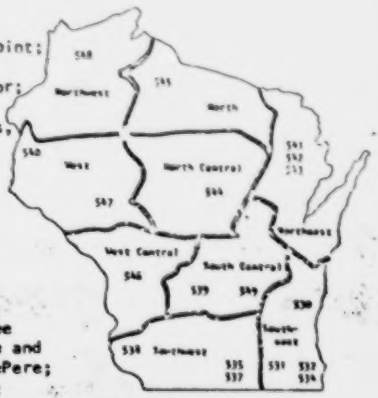

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FORESTS AND TREES: CONSERVATION AND REFORESTATION IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

JOYCE S. STEWARD

For one who is old enough to be retired, and who has enjoyed an association with Wisconsin Council from its beginnings, your ecology or environment theme at first suggested a chance to reminisce, . . . perhaps to say "Things were somehow better back then." But as I tried to draw a parallel between the time when there was no acid rain or impure water or preying upon wildlife, and the time when students rattled off parts of speech, wrote a Palmer method hand, and always put topic sentences up front in paragraphs on single ideas--I realized that neither situation ever really existed. Pests brought plagues that wiped out half the population of urban cities, children drank from contaminated wells and got typhoid, and all we know of some early animal species we learn from cave walls -- diagramers of sentences forgot their art and produced prose with poorly placed modifiers; there is undecipherable penmanship in the most valuable historic documents in the British Museum, and grandparents brought up on 1000 page Victorian novels now often sit in front of television rather than go to the library.

But I wanted a parallel -- an Emersonian or Steiglitz-like correspondence -- between ecology and the things I thought were worth saying to you about the work we share -- the teaching of English. About then I had a Christmas note from Ralph Christoffersen -- the principal at Madison's West High where I taught back in early WCTE days. (He's retired too and fishing happily over around Chippewa Falls.) Mr. Christy, as we called him, commented that I'd moved from Wisconsin, where the big forests are pretty much a thing of the past, to an area where some big ones still exist. Now out in Washington State we worry a lot about logging trucks that create hazards on roads, and legislators argue over state timber tax that is earmarked for the school budget, but a company town near me boasts the oldest continuously working mill in the United States and bears a sign announcing that the surrounding tree farms are now entering their *third harvest*.

And just as I began to make the connection between planning in nature and planning in education, I saw an advertisement from another company, Boise Cascade. You may have seen it in national magazines under an appealing picture of a child in the act of writing; the ad reads in part--

> It takes a generation to grow a pencil--that's why the time to grow the next generation's wood and paper products is today . . . Today we'll plant up to six seedlings for every tree we harvest, and we'll nurture and protect them until they come of age . . . so there'll be more tomorrow. Today we'll explore new growing methods . . . We aim to supply the next generation . . . Wood and paper products are our life's blood, and we plan to live a long time.

Hence--my metaphor: one which applies well as we consider not the past, but the decisions we make today for the future--decisions about what is important or unimportant for us as teachers and for our students. Teaching English is our way of supplying the next generation with pencils and books, with their tools for writing and reading--and thinking. And certainly sometimes we must nurture the seedlings of many ideas about how we do it, explore many methods, as we seek the best, the most important, one to "live a long time." Drawing distinctions seems all the more urgent right now

because education in general is under fire, subject to many critics and many ideas. Steven Tchudi, 1984 president of NCTE, says in his inaugural statement, printed in January *English Journal*, that "Within the next few months mandates and legislation will be passed that will shape American education for decades to come . . ." and calls on us to "ensure that proposals for change are based on the best research, theory, and practice of teaching."

I'm reversing the two r's -- reading and writing -- this morning to put writing -- the pencils -- first. I'm doing this partly because it is the area with which I was most closely associated during the final years of my teaching career, and also because it has been the area of so much recent ferment. *The Dictionary of American Idiom* tells me that those who fail to distinguish between forests and trees are those who "fail to judge or understand the whole because of attention to the parts, . . . those who have a tendency to criticize small things and not see the value or aim of future achievement," and the example offered is that of teachers who see errors but fail to notice good ideas. As teachers of writing we're often accused of not doing our job if we don't see -- and *make* students correct -- all the errors. We have been these last few years widely criticized, and we cannot deny the problems: lower test scores are only part of the evidence; our former students often tell us that they do not write well enough on jobs and in college; and surveys show that teachers themselves feel the greatest inadequacy in teaching writing. And among teachers, between schools and colleges, among college departments, between undergraduate and professional schools -- everyone hurls accusations and raises the issue of what is important.

But the situation is, I think, becoming a bit more comfortable. Dorothy Arnof and Bertha Davis, in a just-published book for parents entitled "How to Fix What's Wrong with Our Schools," even name one chapter "Writing Revived." They picture classrooms (these in elementary schools and high schools) "in which the process of writing is taught, with emphasis on the purpose of what is being written and the audience for which the writing is intended. Mechanics are uniformly treated as essential, but essential from a functional point of view, essential because they are tools for communicating." They found classes in which central activity is writing, where both students and teachers work at drafts, and where not only writing but evaluation is a process, given along the way as teachers intervene with help rather than just to give grades after work is complete.

They comment on the amount of writing, especially free writing, that children do in elementary schools, and they say, "In such classes the emphasis is on encouraging children to get their ideas on paper, to view the symbols of writing as useful and intriguing ways to send and receive messages."

To what do Davis and Arnof attribute this change? I'm sorry to say that they think it came about as the result of pressures and mandated state, national, and local testing, although they do acknowledge that "good ideas have been around for a long time."

Just when we're feeling comfortable, though, we might pick up John Goodlad's new book, *A Place Called School*, and find that we still can't be smug. He and his group report on schools they visited:

> The dominant emphasis throughout was still on teaching basic language use skills and mastering mechanics -- capitilization, punctuation, paragraphs, syllabication, synonyms, homonyms, antonyms, parts of speech, etc. These were repeated in successive grades of the elementary years, were reviewed in junior high, and reappeared in senior high schools.

And, of course, some of you might, with me, add that these same skills are often re-emphasized, sometimes necessarily, in college. Goodlad goes on, "Activities suggesting more self-expression and creative thought were scattered, but at some schools there were very few of these." Tests, he says, usually measured basic language skills and usage repetitively, and he concludes, "One wonders about the readiness of students who were confronted again and again with these familiar patterns. What was new to arouse their interest?"

So about the time I was ready to write a new version of the Virginia Slims ad to read, "You've come a long way, teacher of writing," I had to rethink, and add to it, "But you've got a way to go."

The first important thing we might do to go that distance is to help teachers -- more teachers -- recognize some of these good ideas Davis and Arnof mention as having been around, and then to move on to recognize good ideas (sometimes old ones, but supported or extended by recent research) circulating in the present. As writer Donald Hall says, "Only when present connects to past is future possible." Let me suggest a few of the old ideas that still are valuable. It is both humbling and helpful for any teacher to pick up a copy of Rollo Walter Brown's *How the French Boy Learns to Write*. Published first in 1915 after Brown had studied French schools firsthand, that little book was reissued by NCTE in 1965 (almost 20 years ago), in an effort to help teachers understand what we call "the writing process." Listen to a few of Brown's words on the subject:

> In helping pupils toward the actual process of writing down what they say, the French teachers follow one practice -- This is the working over of material in the classroom. Much emphasis is placed upon what one teacher aptly called the imaginative part of composing. That is to say, the boy is encouraged to let his power of association run free for the purpose of collecting as many ideas or images as possible. His only aim is to reach the limits of his subject: nothing that promises to be of the least value is permitted to escape.

Today Janet Emig, Donald Murray, Peter Elbow, and James Britton all re-emphasize that same point -- students must write freely, exploring their thoughts, probing for ideas and images with which to convey them. Here is another bit from Brown's observation:

> The chief responsibility for the pupils' manner of expression rests upon the teacher of the mother tongue, but the writing that the boy does in history, geometry, and his other subjects is made to contribute its full share to his skills.

Evidently we didn't invent writing across the curriculum, either.

Looking through my files, I discovered something I'd saved because I liked it so much -- Newsletter # 5 from WCTE, published in September 1959, the second year of this organization's existence: there a list of thirteen points written by Joseph Mersand, 1958 president of NCTE, is entitled "These Will Strengthen Teaching." I'm going to condense them into ten suggestions, but all the words are Mersand's --

1) Strong motivation is half your battle. Try to devise good reasons for wanting to write.

2) Preparation for writing may be as important as the act of writing itself.

3) The proper environment for writing usually produces better work.

4) We all learn to write by writing -- not by listening to a lecture on writing, reading a textbook or filling in exercises in a workbook.

5) Give students class time in which to write.

6) Encourage revision, the hardest task of all. Short papers are easier to correct and can contribute much to particular phases of writing.

7) Originality and forcefulness of expression are to be prized more than correctness. Encourage students to express whatever they wish. Assure them that their work will be read sympathetically and evaluated fairly. An ounce of praise may sometimes do more than a pound of censure.

8) Integrate writing with other language arts activities; submit students' best compositions to magazines, contests and high school publications; work together as a class on writing -- special skits, programs, for presentation in assembly or on a school radio station.

9) Do some writing yourself. It will help you understand pupils' problems.

10) Develop a respect for writing that will be felt throughout the school.

I was struck by the fact that Mersand's list in many ways anticipates a position paper that the NCTE Commission on Composition evolved just this year. That group, after much consideration, prepared a document centering on these points:

First, under *Why Write?* they define the act of writing and assert that it is best taught as a process in which the writer imagines an audience, sets goals, develops ideas, and produces and edits drafts. And they go on to state,
second, that classrooms should be scenes for writing, where a full range of possibilities and forms are explored
third, that writers need to recognize purposes and audiences beyond school, beyond attaining grades
fourth, that teachers need special training and should themselves write . . . AND
fifth, that the means of instruction is not exercises but the students' work and discussion of that work.

With such ideas so widespread, why haven't we been even more successful in putting them into practice? With our summer institutes, inservice, classes for teacher preparation, many articles about methods and research in professional journals, and our state and national conferences, why don't all teachers run workshop classrooms where writing goes on and where students accomplish their goals? Do we perhaps overlook some important influencing factors?

Yes, I think we do -- just as the Commission on Composition worked slowly on their document because the members argued over terminology and emphasis, so we have conflicts among ourselves and within our schools. I recall having an argument with a janitor because I wanted chairs in my classroom arranged flexibly in a circle or small groups, not nailed together so he could slide a row at a time when he swept the floor. Some of our failure to progress stems from such small things that stand in the way. Teachers often do not try to manage workshop classrooms because they fear a little disorder, a little too much freedom. I've always considered it lucky that I did my first teaching under a principal who liked what he called the "noise of business." Or we attribute our failure to value writing over tests, or essay tests over machine-scored objective forms, to class size or "overload." We cannot just read about writing activities -- we have to learn to organize them. We have to put first things first, plant and then nurture the seedlings, by showing the value of the kind of teaching we know is important -- then, we might convince administrators, parents, and others and win more opportunities to carry out the teaching that prepares for the future.

We also have to be realistic. In our valuing of process we have to remember that much of the writing our students will do, much that they want to prepare to do, requires the completion of a satisfactory *product*. We get caught in *either/or* -- many times I've seen the slogan, "process, *not* product" -- and we forget that we must strive for *both/and*. Students will be *judged*, by others if not by ourselves; some products will be judged better than others, just as gold and silver medals are awarded in the Olympics.

Because we must recognize the ultimate goal of achieving a good product, I think it is important that we put more effort into helping students find *substance* for their writing. The *good ideas* that teachers sometimes acknowledge before they mark errors are frequently not very good at all. I've seen many papers headed by a meaningless phrase, "good ideas . . . but . . ." with no help offered concerning the thoughts, with no comment on the extent of development, the logic of support, and so on. Those words are often, in fact, a way to compliment something, without pinpointing or analyzing. If the idea is good, then the student should be told why, what makes it good, and where it can perhaps be strengthened. And if, as I suspect is more often true, the ideas, like the expression of them, should be much more substantial, then the help we give students needs to begin long before they handle the pencil.

Let me illustrate: Shawn, a high school senior who lives near me, came by one afternoon with a request that I read an essay he'd written for college application. A boy who tests well, he also writes fairly well, at least by correctness standards. The essay required that he explain how some person has influenced his life, his values and ambitions. Since I am myself mother of a son, I was pleased that he wrote about his mother. I marked a few words, straightened out a sentence, and then asked some questions: what had his mother, this woman he's known intimately for seventeen years, really done? He caught on. "Oh, I haven't really *said*, have I?" he asked. Shawn had said his mother was an influence, but he had not shown me *how*. This woman who has struggled with three boys alone for a long time, who now has remarried and led them to new adjustments in a new location, who is a reader and who loves history, and who takes an active part in local government has shaped his interests in politics, in school organizations, and boys' state, and his desire to study law, or something similar. All this he hadn't told me, yet it was something he knew and needed to say, if his essay was to have any real substance.

If we want to help students with substance, we might start by listening to writers, not just to other teachers. Almost without exception, writers tell us that they find success *only* when they discover their *material*--when they have an idea they feel they want to convey, indeed that they *must* convey, when they find *something to say*.

That discovery of something to write about is the first step in the process and the first step toward a worthwhile product. So--I think it is important that we give more time than we usually do to helping students take that first step--helping them *observe*, notice their lives, people around them; helping them to see that sights and events add up to *mean*; awakening them to experience and leading them to discovery through research. We must lead students to look for facts, examples, images, and language that will enable them to refine their ideas and to convey them to others.

Let's hear what one writer says about observation: This comes from novelist Mary Hanner:

> I remember what a friend of mine told me about the difference between a writer and a non-writer. He described the non-writer as seeing a Japanese plum tree in full bloom in April and saying, "Wow, what a beautiful tree" and then going on with his immediate chores. The writer sees the same tree and says, "Wow, what a beautiful tree" and climbs over the fence, no doubt trespassing, to get a closer look. The writer touches the tiny pinkish-white petals, smells each one and gets somewhat intoxicated by the aroma, examines how the flowers fit together, wonders why the tree blooms before it gets leaves; and knows, for sure, that with the first wind all that beauty will fall on the ground and turn brown. So the writer ends up in tears.

Now there is the entire cycle -- from first notice, through careful observation, emotional reaction, to awareness of wider meaning -- the movement from experience to a message about it. Similarly, writers observe through research, and Barbara Tuchman tells us about that in *Practicing History:* She too thinks one must begin by "falling in love with the subject," pursuing everything that can be discovered about it, then move on to *distilling* and *selecting* in order to *enthrall* a reader. "Research is endlessly seductive," she says, and "The most important thing is knowing when to stop."

Both Hanner and Tuchman comment on a second step in the Process: Hanner says, "There is really no magic to writing. It happens day after day, slowly. Writing is primarily a great deal of time spent at the typewriter." And Tuchman says,

> Writing is hard work. One has to sit down and think and transform thought into readable, . . . interesting sentences that both make sense and make the reader turn the page. It means rearrangement, revision, adding, cutting, rewriting. But it brings a sense of excitement, almost of rapture, ... In short, it is an act of creation.

(In all the current articles that tell teachers to regard writing as *recursive* (another of the buzz words) rather than *linear*, I've never seen a better description than Tuchman gives in that one sentence.

But let's return to the forests and trees, to the necessity that we see the whole and not just the parts. How our students write and how we help them along the way are significant eventually because of *what they write*. Their future teachers, employers, and the world in general won't care about how they got there, but they will care about what they say and how effectively they say it. Substance seems to me of first importance in writing, but clarity, economy, the force of the right words in the right places, and, yes, the absence of distracting error will all be judged. We build our students' future achievement only when we remember that all parts make up the whole.

Before I leave the subject of writing, let's think for a minute about those errors, and about the stress the public places on them and on the tests that measure them. True, we don't want the role of Miss Picky, whom everyone fears. We long ago gave up on many minor points and ceased to be like the English teacher who took her new poodle to obedience school and then immediately withdrew the animal when she heard that the first command was "lay down." But -- we too are measured by tests and errors, and it seems to me important that we devise ways to win at that game. You perhaps know the Markham poem "Outwitted" and will forgive me for parodying a serious idea: if the perfectionists draw circles and leave us out, we might have the wit to draw a wider one and take them in. We'll do this if we are clever enough to put correctness in right perspective, not making it the goal of teaching or allowing it to dominate instruction, but recognizing it as part of the whole. With a little effort, I think we can cleverly select and teach those elements that are important for test taking and for future demands. Making students conscious of poorly placed modi-

fiers and vague pronoun reference is, after all, necessary if they are to write clearly. By using their work, not canned or artificial exercises, and by introducing small amounts of purposeful drill only when it is meaningful or necessary, we might indeed outwit the critics and help our students.

Considering errors forces me to come briefly to the possible (probable?) computerizing of composition, and our teaching of it. Just as machine-scoring brought mass testing, so now new technology may make those tests unnecessary. Certainly students who have access to Spelstar may no longer need spelling lessons; and we may never again need several weeks of teaching research paper techniques and form -- students may even call up notes on a particular topic; and documentation and bibliography will be easy and consistent.

We may, of course, encounter problems. Third graders who enjoy composing at a terminal may reject writing later if the eighth grade doesn't have access to machines, just as some foreign language programs died when schools introduced them early but couldn't offer instruction continuously. And what happens to grading practices or charges of discrimination, I leave to your imagination and solution. I'm sure the advantages and possibilities are almost endless -- just see the last issue of the CCC journal for many of them, or the last issue of *Simply Stated*, a newsletter of the Document Design Center of the American Institutes for Research. However, Joseph Weitzenbaum, professor of computer science at MIT and a speaker at NCTE last fall, reminds us in an article in *Harper's* for March that the effect may be to push some *real problems* into obscurity, especially if we "avoid confrontation with the need for fundamentally critical thinking."

Certainly computers won't supply that substance I called for -- but they may make it easier for students to convey it. They may, in fact, make it possible for us to spend more time helping students find substance and less time on the other parts of the writing process. I'll reserve judgment, but I will cite an incident reported at the University of Washington recently. The Apple man was offering Macintoshes at a discount to both students and faculty, so reporters sought the opinions of professors who were already getting papers written with the micro-processor. One professor said that papers he saw tended to be too long; students didn't select, but, having the information and thinking length would impress, they put everything in. He found -- and I quote -- "the papers mechanically almost perfect, but similar in style, and often dull and lifeless."

Of course, we'll have to agree that if the machine does half our work, we may want to buy two. And one thing is certain -- if we waste less paper, we'll be able to save trees.

I want to shift now for a few minutes to the other of the two r's for which we are directly responsible -- *reading*. I'm not using the term, however, to talk about reading skills, but about reading *literature*. Of course, elementary teachers introduce children to reading skills, and develop these, as to some extent do all teachers of all subjects all along the line. As educators, most of us accept the principle "every teacher a teacher of reading." But as teachers of English we have a special content for reading -- *literature*.

Perhaps because I spent much of my career in composition, you'll allow me to say that we have focused on that area so extensively in recent years that we have neglected somewhat the teaching of literature. You can say justifiably, that it was for a long time the other way around, and I'd have to agree. But why must we fall again into that trap of either/or -- and not be able to keep two interests, both parts of the whole, in mind at once?

My accusation of neglect is borne out by any quick check of recent professional journals -- *English Journal* editors have for several years been saying that all they receive are articles on composition. *College English* some months looks almost like the 4C's Journal; and many new little writing groups now publish newsletters.

Course enrollments indicate the same trend, at least on the college level. Some new literature electives, in both colleges and high schools, have special appeal -- ethnic and regional literature, science fiction, women in literature. But many courses that were once heavily enrolled are now offered intermittently, and most colleges are hiring far more people in composition than in literary fields.

Some of this shift is practical, and certainly explainable. But reports such as Ernest Boyer's *High School* again and Mortimer Adler's *Paideia Proposal* remind us that we need to regard both writing and literature as essential. Boyer writes,

> Reading, writing, speaking and listening -- along with computation -- are the basic tools of education. But the mastery of language means more than acquiring these essential skills. During high school all students should move toward cultural literacy. They should discover how language is a part of culture, probably the most important part. They should learn about the variety of ways civilization is sustained and enriched through a shared use of symbols. As a first step we recommend that all students, through a study of literature, discover our common literary heritage and learn about the power and beauty of the written word.

Boyer's Cargnegie funded visitors found that most students now take "at least one literature course to meet high school graduation requirements, but rarely encounter, in depth, enduring works of literature." He states, that "Many literature classes we visited were not inspired. Language skills, not great literature, were being taught. . . . Rarely were great books listed as required," . . . and "still more discouraging was the fact that only gifted students were being introduced to great literature." He concludes with a strong endorsement for teaching literature, saying it "addresses the emotional part of the human experience . . . provides another perspective on historical events, telling us what matters and has mattered to people in the past . . . transmits from generation to generation enduring spiritual and ethical values . . . and brings both delight and re-creation."

John Goodlad's visitors found almost the same thing, although he makes fewer suggestions about how things ought to be. He lists titles of literary works taught, and comments that most (such as *Pigman, The Outsiders*) seem to be chosen for "high interest and relatively low reading difficulty." He finds missing from secondary lists those titles and authors long associated with high school curriculum -- Shakespeare, Dickens, *Huckleberry Finn, Les Miserables, Catcher in the Rye*. Like Boyer, he says that "encounters with literature were far fewer for students in low than in high tracks." Certainly his findings furnish grist for the mill of those who are currently objecting to the "dumbying" of textbooks and reading lists, an objection that to me seems exceedingly important and valid.

I'm afraid we have to be realists though, and perhaps a bit skeptical if Mortimer Adler's *Paideia Proposal* leads to anything like "great books." But, at least, Adler forces us to think about how we have laid aside much that is important, and whatever opinions we have of the proposal, it seems to me we have to agree that all, not just some, students need exposure to quality reading. His suggestion that teachers approach literature through Socratic discussion, eliciting responses and thought, not memorization for

quizzing, is not only the well-known great books method, but that of the good teachers always and of great teacher educators from the late Dora V. Smith to Louise Rosenblatt to Robert Carlsen.

We have to ask seriously how we can make literature a vital part of school curriculum, in the hope, at least, that it can still be part of students' lives. I'm reminded of a New Yorker cartoon -- a middle-aged couple sit before the T.V. set, their dog standing patiently beside them, holding the newspaper in his mouth. The caption, presumably the speech of the man, "Sorry, but nobody around here reads anymore." John Goodlad comments on the pervasive influence of television, saying that "If television as now offered is becoming the new common school, we would be well advised to reinvigorate the old one." Certainly we know that students are not -- most of them -- reading widely or deeply on their own. The NCTE nominees whose papers I read last fall were in difficulty when their impromptu topic called for at least two examples of literature dealing with the search for quality of life. Several mentioned Thoreau, but seemed to know only a little about his life rather than to have read and understood *Walden*. One, I recall, thought Hawthorne wrote *The Old Man and the Sea*. A few scattered titles were there, but not much evidence of understanding the literary work. Recently, I asked a teacher-friend about her students' reading. She tells me that the best students are no longer those interested in literature; but among others she finds reading runs to Harlequin romances and Louis L'Amour. I know library statistics, but they don't convince me that much serious reading is done by students between grades 6 and 12. And during the last years I taught, when I asked on a "get-acquainted questionnaire" about the latest leisure reading of my college students, I got little in response.

I'm sure I don't know all the causes involved. Diane Ravitch, Columbia University professor and author of a new history of education, editorializes in *Education Week* for January 11. She calls for bringing back literature and history to elementary schools through the use of "real" books rather than basal readers. She asks, "How can children be motivated to read at all if what they learn to read isn't worth the time it takes to decipher?" and she asserts, "Education is debased when the curriculum is stripped of its content and when skills, free of any cultural, literary or historical context, are all that is taught." She is very firm, saying

> The problem, I would suggest, lies not with the teachers, but with the experts who have told them for years that skills and process are all that matter. In this strange world of overcredentialed but undereducated, content, knowledge, and context count for nothing. The children of this regimen arrive in junior high schools and secondary schools knowing *how*, but not *why* or *what*. They have been miseducated--they have been taught to read without learning to love reading.

In many ways what Ravitch says about reading fits well with my concern about teaching the writing process without ultimately requiring a product of some substance. We are in both instances thinking of the method, not result; the trees but not the forest. Or again, I'm reminded of Jerzy Kosinski's comment in a speech at NCTE a few years ago -- he said we don't need so much worry over students reading bad books; we need to worry instead that they don't read at all. Planting the love of reading begins early -- but we should today ask what we can do to nurture it.

First, as with writing, teachers must set the example. I recall a conference in the 50's, organized on the University campus by John Searles, long associated with WCTE, at which Frank Jennings, an editor of *Saturday Review*, was the speaker. He talked about inspiring students to read, bringing them to value literature as a part of their lives, and as he con-

cluded, he leaned across the podium and said, sternly, firmly to all of us -- "If you don't read, don't you dare teach."

We need to love reading if we are to transmit our enthusiasm to students. We need to talk reading with them, reading books they suggest and suggesting in turn. If I were teaching high school again, I'd put a lot of free reading time, library time, into the day. I'd try to make classes exciting with oral presentation and discussion of stories, plays, books, poems, and essays. I'd organize book clubs, and fan clubs for particular authors and types of books. I'd quit saying that we don't know how to teach poetry and find some ways to do it -- poetry readings, poems considered in juxtaposition to trigger ideas (John Ciardi's suggestion), poems highlighting emotional experiences from students' lives. I'd try to create imagination-prompting tests, asking for extensions or responses concerning *meanings*, not just for facts. I'd try to relate things to the moment -- Elinor Wylie's "Velvet Shoes" on a snowy Wisconsin morning to start class; Housman's "Cherry now is hung with bloom" on a day of spring blossoms, Frost's "Nothing Gold Can Stay" juxtaposed perhaps with "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed," as poignant reminders that spring and life are short, transient. I'd invite some readers-in-residence to visit and talk. We have writers-in-residence, why not readers? For instance, West High in Madison has instituted a number of book talks in the lunch hour. Guest speakers are community-people, who come to talk informally about a favorite book. The student response has been phenomenal -- 48 to 160 students for each talk. It may be time again to fuse the teaching of writing and reading in a harmonious whole, such as that suggested by Adler's word *Paedeia*.

Of course students must read for facts -- for information and the business of everyday. But there is a purpose beyond that, and we have been in danger of letting it slip away. If each of you could give brief testimony about an unforgettable experience in a class you took or one you've taught, I'd venture that many of the incidents cited would involve literature in some way. We must make possible the experience of transport explained by Longinus in ancient Greece; described by Keats when he looked into Chapman's Homer; and praised by Emily Dickinson, who found "no frigate like a book."

Have you seen the ads for the "I Can Read" books, or caught them on the television? If you have, you'll recall perhaps that here again the advertiser makes use of an appealing child. This time the child holds a book, not a pencil, and looks up to smile and exclaim, "I can read . . I can read." There is a glory in that discovery -- let's not deny it to future generations for whom we are truly the suppliers of both pencils and books.

In closing, I'll carry the analogy in my title to a final step. It is in education as it is with our environment. We won't be able to supply the pencils and books, the education necessary for the future, without master forestry -- planning with foresight and intelligence, weighing our choices, setting priorities. Those of the current studies that are broad, sound, and thorough, realistic and yet idealistic, offer some of those plans. Research in English also is offering increasingly useful insights into how students learn. Most important, however, in carrying out those plans are the teacher -- you, and the teachers to come, perhaps some of them now studying in your classes or training in your classrooms.

In his address at NCTE in Denver last fall, Bill Irmscher, the outgoing president, talked about all the current attacks and the suggestions about curriculum changes, more money, class size, materials, and so on. Then he made this statement:

> What impresses me about all these, however, is that they deal with external factors, things that can be adjusted . . . without necessarily affecting the basic cause. . . . Let me cite my own experience: any weak class I have ever taken . . . any good class I have known has been attributable to the teacher. If things are going to get better . . . I will place my hopes on people, not programs or practices.

Peter Drucker, in his autobiographical *Adventures of a Bystander*, describes two of his elementary school teachers. Miss Sophy had a "gift in her keeping," charisma, and an "inborn talent for exciting students to learn," a passion for her profession. Miss Elsa had pedagogical skills, she knew how to "program learning in the student," to *guide* learning; she was skilled in methods, as Drucker reminds us was Socrates. Passion and skill -- both, Drucker says, are vital. Born teachers can become great by adding to their innate gift the methods of the pedagogue; the pedagogue who understands how students learn, in turn, finds an "intoxication" in the enlightenment, the smile of learning on the student's face.

Good teachers -- good friends -- it is through your perspective about choices in education, and your dedication and work, passion and skill in planting and nurturing the opportunities for learning that your students will find lifelong satisfaction in writing and reading.

ERIC/RC REPORT Evaluating Language Development
Continued from page 28

each child does with language then become the basis of classroom activities that promote the expansion of communication skills.

Using classifications such as these to identify the various ways children use language can help teachers form realistic expectations about the performance abilities of individuals and shape appropriate instruction.

Accurate knowledge of children's language usage is essential for teachers who care about increasing their students' language facility. In addition to those already discussed, the ERIC system contains a number of materials dealing with the evaluation of language development. These may be found by searching monthly issues of Resources In Education (RIE) and the Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE) under the headings "Language Acquisition," "Child Language," and "Language Usage."

CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

The Committee on Classroom Practices in Teaching English invites educators at all levels--elementary, secondary, and college--to submit manuscripts for the 1986 *Classroom Practices* publication which will focus on the theme, "Teaching Thinking--Really!" Articles should describe successful classroom practices that activate students' thinking--creative, logical, or critical. The intent of the book is to present strategies which emphasize students' active involvement in their own learning. Articles should therefore focus on what students do in the classroom. Manuscripts may include such topics as students' self-selection of reading materials and topics for writing; real-life problem-solving; and classroom activities that develop students' thinking skills.

Manuscripts can range in length from two to ten pages. Two copies should be submitted, with the author's name and address appearing only on a title page attached to the front of each copy. Manuscripts should be mailed before *September 1, 1985* to the Committee Chair: Jeff Golub, 4550 W. Sheridan, Seattle, WA 98199.

USING LITERATURE TO TEACH LANGUAGE

RICHARD D. CURETON
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

In the fall of 1982, I participated in a sectional entitled "Using Language to Teach Literature" at the NCTE Annual Convention in Washington, D.C. The participants in the session represented a range of academic specialties where literature enters the classroom, each demonstrating at the college level how language study can enrich literary study.

The language of literature is a vast, but largely neglected, area of study that can make an immense contribution to literary education if taught consistently and competently. And this point was forcefully argued by the other participants in the session. For instance, Tim Austin (Linguistic Studies, Loyola University, Chicago) demonstrated how a teacher can use established methods of grammatical description to help students understand and respond to difficult syntactic structures in the works of poets such as Pope and Shelley. Ned Laff (Univ. of Illinois-Champaign-Urbana) demonstrated how teachers can use articulatory phonetics to help students become more sensitive to the effects of sound in poetry. Pru Byers (Literature and composition programs, Marquette University, Milwaukee) demonstrated how a teacher can use a knowledge of the language to *rewrite* portions of texts using other linguistic choices--thus highlighting the relative appropriateness of the forms chosen by the author. And I could have continued in this vein. For instance, I could have demonstrated how recent semantic theories can help students understand the intricacies of narrative perspective and fictional "worlds." Or how recent advances in text linguistics can help students understand how authors highlight and link information in a text. All of this would have been well and good. With another presentation of this sort, our session would have provided the audience with a broad survey of current applications of language study to literary analysis, and we could have left Washington with the hope that our brief presentation might have an influence (however slight) on literary education as it is actually practiced in classrooms around the country.

As you can guess from the conditionals above, however, I have come to think that this is a false hope. And why I think so became the topic of my contribution to the session. While I believe deeply in the productivity of using language to teach literature, in recent years I have become more concerned with the converse: the productivity of using literature to teach language. Let me explain.

As I see it, the major obstacle that keeps language analysis out of the literary classroom is not unfamiliarity with stylistics but ignorance about language. As far as I can tell, students today at all levels in the curriculum learn next to nothing about how to describe the structure and function of the linguistic forms in their language. While most students can give some knee-jerk (and consequently erroneous) label to a few grammatical structures (parts of speech, for instance), for the most part they know next to nothing about their linguistic heritage in any deep sense--next to nothing about language varieties and how they are controlled by rhetorical purpose and social situation; and next to nothing about structural choices and their different functional effects. This situation puts a language-oriented approach to literature in not

only a factual but a *logical* bind. Stylistics is an applied discipline. Stylisticians try to demonstrate how an explicit knowledge of language can be an aid in literary analysis. But if students no longer learn about language, this approach to literature can never be practiced in any productive way. Students no longer have the necessary analytical tools.

It is interesting to speculate about the immediate causes of this situation; one could suggest several. Most alarming to me is the lack of emphasis on language preparation in our teacher education programs. For instance, at UWM prospective English teachers are required to take only *two* language courses--a course in English Linguistics (in which students spend only one week on each of the major areas of linguistics: phonetics, morphology, syntax, etc.) and a course in Modern English Grammar (in which students try to master all of the details of English structure in one semester). This can hardly constitute adequate training for a language teacher! In one semester, it is impossible to gain a productive command of English linguistics or English grammar. And the program, notice, demands no other competence. For instance, students can choose to know nothing about the history of the language, nothing about dialects and language variation in English, and nothing (to get back to the case in point) about literary style.

This decline in language pedagogy is not solely the result of educational policy, however. Developments *within* the professional study of language itself have also contributed to this situation. During the 60s, 70s, and 80s, there has been an increasing divorce between the study of language and the study of literature. In many universities, the popularity of Chomskyian linguistics has spawned separate departmental structures responsible for the study of language ("Linguistics" departments), and since Chomskyian linguistics has been largely English-based, this has taken many students who are interested in English language studies out of English departments and into these separate academic programs. Consequently, it has become increasingly difficult for a student to follow an educational program that *combines* an interest in language and an interest in literature. Unfortunately, when this happens, English language programs (in any broad, productive sense) cease to exist: A student is forced to study "language" (in the narrow Chomskyian sense) or "literature" (with equally narrow thematically-oriented approaches).

This divorce between English and Linguistics departments has only been magnified by the exclusively formal, non-functional goals of transformational grammar. Transformational grammarians, at least in the beginning, were exclusively interested in grammaticality, not language *use*. Grammaticality, for these linguists, was defined as the "proper" domain of language study ("linguistic competence") while language use was relegated to what they considered to be an unscientific, theoretically muddled area of investigation ("linguistic performance"). However, a theory of language that has no concern for *why* a particular structure is used is extremely limited; it is of almost no conceivable use to literary (or any other generally humanistic study.)

Of course, this is all history--spilt milk that is easy to describe but hard to clean up. The major question facing language educators still remains: How can we revive productive language study in the schools? I have two suggestions.

The first suggestion is to bring a *functional* study of language back into the English classroom. Language analysis will only be appreciated if it is related to other aspects of a students' experience--their personal interaction with others (politeness, indirection, formality,

etc.); their interaction with larger social forces (advertising, propaganda, occupational jargons, geographical and social dialects, etc.) and their search for personal identity and expression (style). While at one time it was hard for a teacher to secure the proper training and materials to teach this approach to language, these materials are now readily available. In the past fifteen years, a group of British linguists centered around the University of London (Randolph Quirk, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech, Jan Svartvik, M.A.K. Halliday, David Crystal, and others) have developed a complete description of English that preserves the best of traditional and contemporary insights into the functions of grammatical structures in the language. Their major work, *A Grammar of Contemporary English* (London: Longman, 1972), has been available in textbook form for more than ten years now *(A Concise Grammar of Contemporary English* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973). This reference work contains all that an English teacher need know about English grammar from a functional viewpoint. Excellent supporting volumes using the same terminology are also available that cover language varieties (David Crystal and Derek Davy, *Investigating English Style* (London: Longman, 1969) and literary style (Geoffrey Leech and Michael Short, *Style in Fiction* (London: Longman, 1981). These three works can form the nucleus of a solid program in functional English grammar. I would recommend that *all* English teachers master the terminology and insights in these three works so that they can teach this material (in some graded form) in their classes. If this demands *re*education, so be it. If this demands the *creation* of graded materials, so be that as well.

My second suggestion is to bring literature back into language pedagogy. Literature provide a magnificent pedagogical tool with which a teacher can demonstrate the power and limitations of the major expressive functions in the grammar. And by "expressive functions" I don't mean the time-worn literary hobby-horses "connotation" and "image." If students are to gain a deep understanding of the expressive resources of their language, they must start to learn early on about the functional complexities of verbal tense, aspect, and mood; nominal definiteness, case, gender, and number; adjectival restrictiveness, comparison, and inherency; adverbial intensification, limitation, and comment; clausal transitivity and modality; sentential subordination, coordination, and apposition; pronominal ellipsis and reference; and pragmatic suggestion, indirection, and information distribution. Grammars such as Quirk et al. quoted above provide a reference that will *describe* these concepts, but literature provides a teacher with a way to illustrate these functional distinctions in context and in action.

In the best works of fiction, regardless of genre, authors try to create verbal structures that coherently dramatize a certain way of looking at the world--either negatively (to expose its limitation and inadequacies) or positively (to suggest its potential for great human development). In these texts, authors will often seize upon the normal structure in the language for expressing the crucial functional element in this world-view and will concentrate this structure in the text. Or, if this functional element does not exist, they will try to forge a new structure to serve their purpose. It has been my experience that examining these texts in class is the best possible way to teach students about the central role of language in structuring that peculiar experiential structure we call our "world."

Literary texts are intrinsically engaging. They naturally generate a motivation to explore and understand. And when the grammatical point is made, there is a triple pay-off: Students acquire a new consciousness

about a fundamental expressive device in their language; they engage and appropriate the central experience of another bit of their literary heritage; and they are challenged to confront an aspect of their own constructed "worlds." This is a wonderfully synthetic pedagogical exercise. It is my belief that this process should be a central component of the humanistic enterprise of English education wherever it is practiced.

While teaching materials that would allow this method to be applied widely still need to be developed, in principle there is no limit to the number and diversity of texts that yield themselves to this classroom exercise. While I can't give an exhaustive discussion of possible materials here, what follows are a few suggestions.

The easiest texts to locate and use are texts that deal with the basic semantic relations in the clause. Many artists throughout literary history have been concerned with human's *agentivity*--their ability to control their actions and willfully act on their world. Agentivity is primarily expressed in the basic clausal patterns in the language. Transitive verbs usually indicate agents acting on objects; intrasitive verbs often indicate non-agentive processes (things that just "happen" or which "develop" without human control). Authors often manipulate these structures to convey a certain world-view. For instance, Don Freeman has discussed the way Keats transforms the normally intransitive and copular structures in the first stanza of "To Autumn" to dramatize one view of the the season: Autumn's all-powerful agency in bringing the harvest to fruition.[2]

> Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
> Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
> Conspiring with him how to load and bless
> With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
> To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
> And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
> To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
> With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
> And still more, later flowers for the bees,
> Until they think warm days will never cease,
> For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

In the poem, Autumn appears as the subject of transitive verbs: Autumn "loads and blesses" the vines with fruit, "bends" the trees with apples, "fills" all fruit with ripeness, "swells" the gourd, and "plumps" the hazel shells--while we usually refer to these events as natural *processes* rather than agentive actions (Gourds swell; trees bend over; nuts become plump; vines become loaded with fruit; the fruit becomes filled with ripeness).

In another well-known essay, Sam Keyser has demonstrated how Wallace Stevens (in "The Death of a Soldier") limits clauses almost exclusively to intransitive and intensive (copular) structures to convey the opposite world-view: a world without metaphysical agency.[3]

> Life contracts and death is expected,
> As in a season of autumn.
> The soldier falls.
>
> He does not become a three-days personage,
> Imposing his separation,
> Calling for pomp.

Death is absolute and without memorial,
As in a season of autumn,
When the wind stops,

When the wind stops and, over the heavens,
The clouds go, nevertheless,
In their direction.

In the poem, life "contracts," a soldier "falls," the wind "stops," and the clouds just "go." This is the structural and functional complement of the first stanza of the Keats poem.

These literary manipulations of agency are even more striking when they focus directly on the possibilities of human self-expression. Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* is a good example. In *Winesburg*, all of the characters are crippled by their inability to control and integrate the conflicting forces in their personalities. They lack what critics have called an "animate wholeness" that would allow them to function productively as human beings. Anderson dramatizes these "grotesque" personalities in scrupulously non-agentive clausal patterns--even to the extent of straining the grammar at times. Locutions that we take for granted when describing human action (e.g., *he raised his hand; he spoke; he smiled; he decided to stop; he turned off the light;* and the like) are transformed by Anderson into a strangely non-agentive idiom that directly dramatizes the personal ineffectuality of his characters. In the text, body parts act without any linguistically expressed agency (e.g., Hands "come forth," voices "talk, words "tumble" out of mouths," etc.). And thoughts and emotions are reified into "things" and act as independent agents (e.g., Doubts "beset" people; thoughts "visit" minds; regrets "awake," respect "grows big" in people, and so forth). These stories are a wonderful vehicle to illustrate the presuppositions behind our normal expressions for the agency of the will in the human personality.[4]

While I don't have space here to discuss all of the other functional distinctions in the language in this detail, I can briefly suggest some of my favorite teaching materials for a few of them.

The "categorizing" power of attributive position in the noun phrase (i.e., the position between the noun and after any determiners or post-determiners) can be illustrated from the works of poets who try to fix perceptions of transcient objects and events. For instance, Gerard Manley Hopkins begins "The Wreck of the Deutschland": *Thou mastering me/ God.* This structure beautifully executes his poetic project: It defines the supreme being in direct relationship to his poetic persona (This is an *inherently* "mastering me" God--not one that masters on certain occasions or who masters others). This recategorization of experience cannot be accomplished with predicative structures. Notice the difference between Hopkins' structure and the more normal phrasing: *Thou God, who masters me always. . . .*

The pragmatics of indefiniteness is best illustrated with texts which use *in medias res* openings. For instance, the opening of Yeats' "Leda and the Swan":

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed
By the dark webs, . . .

illustrates dramatically how the definite article assumes the reader's familiarity with the myth and draws the reader directly into the rape scene. Compare: *A sudden blow: great wings beat above a staggering girl. . . .*

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Tense distinctions are often hard to illustrate, but poets occasionally confuse time reference to dramatize complex psychological states. My favorite is John Berryman's use of the timeless present and simple past tenses within the bounds of the same sentence in "Dreamsong 29":

> But never did Henry, as he thought he did,
> end anyone, and hacks her body up
> and hide the pieces, where they may be found.

In this sentence, *did . . . end* is in the simple past and is matched later on with (*did*) . . . *hide*. *Hacks,* however must be in the timeless present (It has a third person singular inflection, *-s*). This tense confusion perfectly dramatizes Henry's tortured conscience as he fights a recurrent nightmare that he has murdered his father. (He didn't do it (in the simple past) but each morning (in the timeless present) he imagines that he did and reenacts the crime).

I like to illustrate the function of negation with Gwendolyn Brooks' "The Mother." It begins:

> Abortions will not let you forget
> You remember the children you got that you did not get,
> The damp small pulps with a little or with no hair,
> The singers and workers that never handled the air.
> You will never neglect or beat
> Them, or silence or buy with a sweet.
> You will never wind up a sunking thumb
> Or scuttle off ghosts that come.
> You will never leave them, controlling your luscious sigh,
> Return for a snack of them, with gobbling mother-eye.

The central feature of the pragmatics of negation is that a speaker will not negate something unless the positive assertion is expected or has already been asserted (e.g., Note the implication of *The captain was not drunk today)*. Brooks uses this fact to dramatize the mental state of the aborted mother, her grief at the loss of a potential (expected, already "asserted") l!fe.

Grammatical mood can be illustrated from various sources. Emily Dickinson is the best source to illustrate the effects of the contrary-to-fact uses of the subjunctive. For instance, "No crowd that has occurred" opens:

> No crowd that has occurred
> Exhibit--I suppose
> That General Attendence
> That Ressurrection--does--
>
> Circumference be full--
> The long restricted Grave
> Assert her Vital Privilege
> The Dust--connect--and live--

Here, Dickinson renders her vision of the final judgment in the subjunctive--a technique she uses in many places to give her poems a mood of visionary unreality.

The general semantics of modal verbs is best illustrated from the works of novelists who create strongly intrusive narrators. For instance, in the opening of *Pride and Prejudice,*

> It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man
> in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.

the irony in the narrative voice is largely due to the insistence conveyed by the discourse-orientation of the modal *must*. The meaning of *must* ("obligation" or "logical necessity") becomes detached from the desires of the bachelors (i.e., it loses its subject-orientation), and the narrative voice becomes the moral voice of society's matchmakers (Mrs. Bennett et al.). A novel opening *All bachelors want a wife* would be a very different novel with a very different message.

Other general aspects of modality can be illustrated effectively from Hawthorne, who uses modal verbs, sentence adverbs, and other devices to undercut the reliability of his narrators and thus blur the relationship between fact and fantasy in his novels and stories. A particularly spectacular example of this intrusive modality appears in "Young Goodman Brown" shortly after Goodman Brown meets the devil.

> It was now deep dusk in the forest, and deepest in that part where these two were journeying. As *nearly* as *could* be discerned, the second traveller was *about* fifty years old, *apparently* in the same rank of life as Goodman Brown, and bearing a *considerable* resemblance to him, though *perhaps* more in expression than features. Still they *might* have been taken for father and son. And though the elder person was as simply clad as the younger, and as simple in manner, too, he had an *indescribable* air of one who *would* not have felt abashed at the governor's dinner table or in King William's court, were *it possible* that his affairs *should* call him thither. But the only thing about him that *could* be fixed upon as remarkable was his staff, which bore the *likeness* of a great black snake, so curiously wrought that it *might almost* be seen to wriggle itself like a living serpent. This, of course, *must have been* an ocular deception, assisted by the *uncertain* light.

Here, Hawthorne weaves his web of romance under a veil of modal qualification.

Functional distinctions in the pronominal system can be best illustrated from the works of authors who are concerned thematically with defining (or redefining) what it means to be "human." For instance, E.E. Cummings often uses pronouns that normally refer to persons (e.g., *he, she, who, whom,* etc.) to refer to inanimate objects--thus redefining "humanness" in his poetic world. If a teacher can get students to make sense out of Cummings' *other* linguistic peculiarities, a poem such as "(nothing whichful about" can dramatize the potential significance of these gender distinctions. The poem begins:

> (nothing whichful about
>
> thick big this
> friendly
> himself of
> a boulder nothing
>
> mean in tenderly
> whoms
> of sizeless a
> silence by noises
> called people called
>
> sunlight

Here, the beams of sunlight are "whoms"; a boulder is a "him(self)."

An exceptionally precise (but more conventionally grammatical) use of pronouns occurs in Frost's "Out, Out." The poem breaks into four sections which tell the story of a boy's accident with a saw and his eventual death. The first section of the poem sets the scene; the boy isn't mentioned. The second and third sections relate the boy's accident and his response to the injury, and here Frost alternates between personal pronouns and personal noun phrases (e.g., *the boy*) when referring to the boy. In the last section, however, Frost only refers to the boy and his existence with personal pronouns and finally with the non-personal pronoun, *it*, and ultimately with the indefinite pronoun *one*.

> So. But the hand was gone already.
> The doctor put *him* in the dark of ether.
> *He* lay and puffed *his* lips out with *his* breath.
> And then--the watcher at *his* pulse took fright.
> No one believed. They listened at *his* heart.
> Little--less--nothing!--and that ended *it*.
> No more to build on there. And they, since they
> Were not the *one* dead, turned to their affairs.

And, of course, it is in this section of the poem that the boy dies. Frost modulates the fullness, definiteness, and gender of these noun phrases in perfect accord with the boy's life force in the poem.[5]

While I must stop here, the productivity of this approach, I think, is evident. Literature provides ready-made lesson plans for a practical course in functional grammar. Go to Milton for participles; Donne for imperatives; James for complex subordination; Hemingway and the Bible for coordination, and so forth. This is no new method. It is a return to the pedagogical strategy of classical rhetoric where grammar was learned in the context of the best writers and the greatest works of literature--where the point was not exclusively to label and collect grammatical butterflies for later inspection but to appreciate linguistic structures for their expressive possibilities and to admire the art of those who have been best able to meld those expressive possibilities into satisfying aesthetic forms.

ENDNOTES

[1]The address by Professor Prudence Byers is reprinted in the January, 1984, *Wisconsin English Journal*; it is titled, "Manipulating Language: A Strategy for Teaching Literature."

[2]Donald C. Freeman, "'Keats' To Autumn': Poetry as Process and Pattern," *Language and Style*, 11:1 (1978), 3-17.

[3]Samuel Jay Keyser, "Wallace Stevens: Form and Meaning in Four Poems," *College English*, 37:6 (1976), 578-598.

[4]These comments are part of a study I presented in the Linguistics I session at the 1981 MMLA meeting in Oconomowoc, WI.

[5]The comments here are indebted to an unpublished manuscript by Haj Ross entitled "Robert Frost's 'Out, Out--': A Way In."

LANGUAGE LEARNING THROUGH SENTENCE COMBINING

NICHOLAS J. KAROLIDES
University of Wisconsin-River Falls

Read any article about the teaching of grammar in relation to composition and you are likely to be told (again) that there is no relationship: the learning of traditional grammar does not enhance the learning of composing skills. Further, recent research on brain development suggests that the abstract nature of grammar is beyond the capabilities of 95% of youngsters under the age of fourteen and should not be taught before junior high school. Indeed there may be a detrimental effect, the negative responses to traditional grammar foci and exercises extending to composing exercises which are identified together.

The major exception to these statements is the experimentation with transformational grammar application, commonly referred to as sentence combining. The many studies initiated by Donald Bateman and Frank Zidonis in 1964, followed by John Mellon, Frank O'Hare and others concur in their findings, revealing that there are significant advances in composing skills through the sentence combining exercises. These advances are reflected in the maturation of sentence structures, this maturation being expressed in the length of the "T-unit" (one main clause plus any subordinate clauses or non-clausal structures), the length of clause and the number of clauses per T-unit. Beyond the sentence, analysis-evaluation of larger units of prose revealed, as in the O'Hare study, that narrative and descriptive compositions were significantly better for students with sentence combining experience than for those without this experience.[1]

The significant point of the O'Hare and many later studies, in contrast to the first, is that the study of grammar was specifically excluded. The manipulation of sentence units substituted. This is not to say, however, that language, even grammar, was not learned though perhaps not its nomenclature. The realization of additional learnings in addition to the maturation of structures is identified by Elroy Pederson's commentary on his own and other's research. He suggests that sentence combining has the potential for improving grammatical, semantic, conceptual and logical fluency as well as structural facility; that there is a symbiotic relationship between content and structure.[2]

I joined the ranks of these promoters by using the sentence combining techniques with sixth graders. Given the recognition about the use of grammar learning as a composing tool, recognizing the need to teach writing in the elementary school and the wide use of writing, I wanted to see what effect such exercises would have at this level; other studies had been with older students. Additionally I was interested in the conscious language learning that could take place within a natural writing context. All together, I worked with four sixth grade classes which included students of various skills; my assessment is based on recurring results.

The composing skill range of these classes was broad as I discovered from several exercises--motivated focused writing and two sentence combining sets--given to establish their writing level. I established categories of writing achievement based on the structural options chosen by

the students as well as the degree of control over the options. Generally there were three levels though at either extreme there were one or two students who were far worse or far better than their peers, the former barely functioning with the written word, the latter matching structures with my college composition theory class.

Category 1: Use primarily of simple, non-imbedded structures, the chief combining form being the compound with prepositional phrases and, very rarely, a relative clause. Frequent fragments and misjoined word units, omissions and word errors also occurred.

Category 2: Use of relative clause constructions as combining forms along with more frequent imbedded elements like prepositional phrases. While fragments and word errors occurred they were less frequent.

Category 3: More extensive overall writing and T-unit development. There was more uniform use of combined and imbedded forms. Language selected was more refined in its specificity. Such combining words as *while, as, so* were used as well as the relative pronouns, *who, which, that*. Participial constructions were used by those few writing in a considerably more advanced style.

After trying out several approaches and combinations of content assignments, I developed a program using open sentence combining exercises, free writing, and motivated focused composing, the last to establish a natural writing setting but also to provide an application aspect that could be evaluated. I was specifically concerned with three objectives:

--to evaluate the practice and effect of sentence combining with sixth graders with varied writing competence
--to establish the possibility of creative sentence building
--to evaluate the effect of such practices on other composing
--to perceive the possibilities of language learning.

With the sentence combining exercises, for these purposes and because the O'Hare model directed exercises seem too narrow and constrained, I did not adhere to the O'Hare model in designating the pattern to be practiced. Having started with a let's- see-what-will-come-out-of-this approach, I continued using "open" exercises taken primarily in modified form from William Strong's book *Sentence Combining*.[3] Several times the students wrote their own base clause groups of sentences. In all instances the students were simply instructed to write one sentence from each group of sentences. Later, as the students became more proficient and as the exercises became more involved, they were asked to write two different sentences from some of the sentence groups.

Each of the writings was followed by an extended discussion session, all the variety of constructions having been placed on the board. The differences in the sentences were noted, first as to how they were ordered and what words had been used to combine the elements and second as to any variance in meaning or emphasis that was thus created. My role, as discussion catalyst, was to underline the possibility of diversity of sentences combined from one group, helping them to realize the method used. Further, it was my intention to build a sense of competence in the students in the recognition of their capabilities and the sentence structure options they actually and potentially had. Sentence building was no longer a mystery. While I did not predetermine structures they could or should use, the potential options were suggested for them by their peers. I did, after the early exercises, make occasional judgmental comments about an "original" phrasing or "mature" structure, showing enthusiasm

for freshness and conciseness. At the beginning of the year we discussed each of the four or five combined sentence units; as the variety of their structures increased along with their ability to talk about them, we usually managed but two. As the year progressed I began gradually to use some of the simpler grammar nomenclature. Altogether we completed about twenty exercises.

The free writing -- the students were asked to write freely without pause for five minutes once a week in the manner of Ken Macrorie[4]--served as a loosening device. Putting words on the page seems to have its own satisfaction and reward, especially for the usually less communicative. These produced a series of disconnected segments for the most part; the capable writers wrote at some length, tending to focus their writing of their own volition.

The focused composing emerged from brainstorming and observation pre-writing sessions of various sorts. Included were sketches of scenes and animals, weather phenomena, poems, field trips. Always the situation and the instructions directed a focus, asking for the incorporation of details. I did not call attention to or ask for the use of combined structures prior to writing activity. In my written and oral comments, I applauded expressive language, effective details, maturing structures, paralleling my responses to the sentence combining exercises, and overall effect.

I kept a copy of everything the students wrote. A comparison, early writings to later, would reveal the kind and degree of change in writing. The sentence combining exercises provided considerable evidence of growth and development as measured by the number and type of combining words and structures, and reduction of errors.

The former can best be shown from two types of examples, illustrated by the responses to "Hamburger" and "Pawnbroker." The "Hamburger" sentence, built from six kernels, was the second combining exercise attempted. In a typical class, the most frequent combining form--half the class--used was the compound, using the conjunction *and*, along with prepositional phrases. Next in frequency, almost half the class, was the comma splice and a noncombination. There were but three others: the use of *after* and *where* and the use of a participial phrase.

SS: The patties have already been laid out on the old black griddle and then they start to sizzle in a greasy puddle.
BJ: they are on the Black griddle has oil on it the patties are sizzling a way
VK: They have been laid out on an old black griddle. Then they began to sizzle in puddle of grease.
LV: they sizzle in a greasy puddle after they have laid out on the old black griddle
KH: The have already been laid on the old black griddle starting to sizzle in a puddle of grease

Compared to this are the results from one unit--four kernels--from the "Pawnbroker" exercise given midway through the year. Admittedly it was extraordinary because the 17 students produced 17 different sentences. You will note in the samples the spread, variety and maturity of forms; also notable is the use of concise phrasing as in KP's "cat-cunning look," a compound adjective form introduced to the class by another student in an earlier exercise; the use of the "invented" verb *cunning* for the occasion by BB who was among the weaker writers, and the effective use of the participial phrase. The diversity is more impressive when the starting point of some of these students is recognized. While this diversity did not occur again, a broad range of structures was later always the case, with even the weaker students using the more advanced forms from time to time. There is but one minor structural error.

BJ: The pawnbroker moves behind his counter while he surveys his estate as he cunning-like a cat.
VK: The pawnbroker moves behind his counter and surveys his estate, cunning like a cat.
TR: The pawnbroker moves behind the counter as he surveys his estate with the cunning of a cat.
ES: The pawnbroker moves behind the counter so he can survey his estate with the cunning of a cat.
GV: The pawnbroker moves behind the counter to survey his estate as cunning as a cat.
KP: The pawnbroker behind the counter surveys his estate with a cat-cunning look.
AK: Like a cat the pawnbroker cunningly surveys his estate, moving behind his counter.

Errors did not cease altogether but there was marked reduction. A tabulation shows 31 structure errors occurring in the first two exercises of 153 sentences, most of these being comma splices, in contrast to 9 errors out of 170 sentences in the last two exercises, this decrease despite the fact that one of these was much more complex. The ablest students, writing increasingly more complex forms from more complex exercises, continued without errors. The average students who had been prone to comma splice errors reduced these to very few or none while successfully manipulating the more advanced combining forms. The less able students advanced in control, somewhat comparable to the level of middle range students at the start of the year. Their control is evident in the final exercise, comparable in density to the earliest exercises, on which there were two errors in the sentence exercise. The pattern of growth and levels of achievement can be seen through comparative samples of combined sentences of three students, below average, average and above average writers respectively; the samples are from the first and second-to-last exercises, the latter being considerably more complex.

BB: 1. the white french fries are loaded into a wire basket
2. then they are lowered slow into oil
3. the bath bath crackles their bath fomes their bath is hot
4. the patatoes release a puff of steam the patatoes are thiny sliced
5. they come out crispy brown with oil.

BB: 1. The tense water sker waits on the float.
2. As the boat lurches forward the rope tightens the slack and the skier is dragged through the water
3. Suddly he is up and leans to one side and veers outward.
4. He glides and dips a silver spray tirals behind him.
5. gleem glitter and liquid is the surface of the glass

JW: 1. French fries are white, they are loaded in a wire basket.
2. They are lowered slowly into oil.
3. Their bath is hot crackles and foams.
4. The potatoes release a puff of steam they are thinly sliced.
5. They come out streaked with oil and crispy brown.

JW: 1. The water skier's muscles are very tense as he waits sitting on the float.
2. The rope tightens the slack as the boat moves forward while it drags the skier through the water.
3. Suddenly he is up as he leans one way his body veers outward.
4. He dips and he glides as the silver sprays trails behind him which the sunshine makes it silver.
5. His hair flatters against his forhead as he sees his reflection in the water.
6. The surface is liquid glass which gleams and glitters.

AK: 1. The white french fries are loaded into a wire basket
2. Slowly they are lowered into oil.
3. The crackling hot bath foams.
4. The thinly sliced potatoes release a puf of steam.
5. The crispy brown potatoes come out streaked with oil.

AK: 1. Waiting with tensed muscles, the water skier sits on the float.
2. The rope tightens the slack as the boat lurches forward, dragging the skier through the water.
3. Suddenly he is up, leaning to one side then veering outward
4. As he dips and glides a sunshine-silver spray trails behind him.
5. In the water he sees the reflection of his hair, flattened against his forehead.
6. The gleaming, glittering surface is liquid glass.

The real measure of achievement is in the focused creative writings. A comparative selection of early and later unedited-unrevised writings of students at the extremes of the competence spectrum suggests the nature of progress and the potential carry over of the sentence combining exercises.

Student GH - Early writing
The river is calm with alge starerd all over. and with a mudy butom that stics to you. thry are wilo trees every ware. in the water on the bank every ward

Student GH - Last writing
When walking into the big stone walls of Fort Snelling I saw largestone buildings and wooden guard houses. While going on with our journey I noticed a round tower with gun holes in it. In reaching the top of the tower I saw an old cast iron cannon. Next to the tower I noted a artilary warehouse with walls 6 feet thik. When living I thought it was werth while.

Student AK - Early writing
The brilliant orange, yellow and red leaved trees reflect on the glassy water. Ripeling, gurgeling water, bubbles over a small dam of branches. Tiny clusters of foam form, and the gentle water carried them on.

The bushes and trees fringeing the sides of the stream, shadow the sunlit water. Closer the water looks brown and opaque.

Crispness fills the air.

Student AK - Last writing
The winter sunset, seen from our woods is very beautiful. First, as the sun lowers in the horizon, the sky turns orangish pink.

As the sun disappears, the sky turns whitish yellow at the edges of the trees in the distance, which are now black against the sky. The yellow edges get whiter as the sun lowers behind the trees.

The rest of the sky is a light greyish lavender mixed with pink clouds that are surrounded by a lighter blue.

The close trees in our back yard are alive, they are great black monsters with clawing hands and long bony fingers, and snakes with skinny, hissing, and forbidding split tongues, on the verge of swallowing you up. They are crusted with a thick layer of white glossy snow.

As it gets darker, a yellow glow peers out from behind the distant trees that are only an uneaven strip of black velvet with little threads unraveling at the top.

The scene continues to darken...untill it disappears into nothing but blackness, blackness that snatches you up if you look too long.

The first student exhibits overt changes in writing performance evident in both the small and large structures. The constructions combine individual kernels accurately. The overuse of the introductory subordinated clause, resulting in a rather stilted style, suggesting another level of needed instruction, does not minimize the extent of this student's progress in language control and maturity of structure. The second

student's development, more subtle partly because of a more sophisticated initial level of competence can be seen in the additions to each sentence --consistent attaching and embedding of both clausal and non-clausal structures and extensive use of detail.

There was evident progress in the writing of these students, encompassing *attitude*--positive feelings about writing, much more ready to write; *facility*--ease in accomplishing a writing task; and *skills*--content development (ie, use of details), structural maturation, and control of the more mature structures. There was evident progress as well in their *language awareness*. Beyond that language awareness expressed in the performance skills is that which was evident in the class discussions of the on-the-board structures. Class members often used simple grammatical nomenclature--adjective, preposition--when identifying words--as well as, occasionally, less initial nomenclature like phrase or participle. More important, even more widespread, in my view was their knowledge of structure and word order, their ability to acknowledge and discuss the relationships of words and their effect, according to their position, on the meaning oremphasis of the sentence.

Of course, not all of the students progressed evenly or at the same rate, even given comparable starting points. Some fairly giant-stepped ahead, showing control and sensitivity and finesse I would not have expected at the outset. I believe these students, even the less able, learned they could write better than they thought they could. Further, I believe they learned considerable about the power and use of language.

What did I learn? How can I account for these changes? My educated hunch is that program elements worked together in moving toward positive performance. Not least of these was the immediate, extended dialog--positive, oral interaction discussing the composed sentences--which not only gave recognition and approval to student efforts but brought composing to a conscious level.

Further, I learned that the less able students, perhaps, comparable to younger writers, need a slower pace, more practice with the less complex exercises to build the *habit* of initial and secondary structures, of several types of embedding, before going on to the more difficult. The focused creative writing also needs to be sequenced in careful stages of development for these students. However, I also learned that these students can and should be challenged, though this sounds contradictory, to write beyond their immediate skills. They will reach out. As for their more able peers, the same holds true. They can learn to manipulate and understand language beyond our current expectations.

NOTES

[1]O'Hare, Frank. *Sentence Combining--Improving Student Writing Without Formal Grammar Instruction.* Urbana, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1971.

[2]Pedersen, Elroy L. *Frontiers in Sentence Combining Research.* ERIC Ed 178 909, 1980.

[3]Strong, William. *Sentence Combining: A Composing Book.* New York: Random House, 1973.

[4]Macrorie, Ken. *Telling Writing.* Rochelle Park, New Jersey: Hayden Book Company, Inc., 1968.

ERIC/RCS REPORT: EVALUATING LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

FRAN LEHR

Recent child language research indicates that by the time children enter school they are amazingly competent communicators. Interacting with family and friends, young children quickly learn appropriate ways to make requests, express emotions and thoughts, and even manipulate others. They are, Menyuk [ED 193 645] argues, intuitive grammarians who develop and test hypotheses about the structures of language based on what they hear and the responses they get when speaking. A major task facing educators is to devise instruction that will enhance rather than inhibit children's natural language growth. Well-planned evaluation is central to such a task. This article will examine materials in the ERIC database that provide suggestions for assessing children's language development.

Standardized tests

In a report prepared for Britain's National Association for the Teaching of English [ED 192 330], Stibbs expresses a number of reservations about the value of standardized tests in assessing language. These tests, he writes, purport to measure some aspect of a student's language ability.

> The problems raised by such claims should immediately be obvious--the tests set out to investigate some internal mental process (an intellectual construct of the test designer) by examining external concrete evidence. To construct the test, the designer has to decide what it is that he is testing. He must postulate that such an "ability" exists and can be isolated and measured. To make sure that this "ability" and only this ability is what he is measuring, he must exclude the influence of other abilities from his measurements. In the current state of knowledge about testing language, and mental processes, what can be measured is at best limited to a few aspects of language which can be isolated. . . . some aspects are relatively trivial, whereas some more fundamental aspects . . . cannot be tested or isolated.

In a critique of standardized tests of children's oral language ability, Black [ED 169 562] notes that they present many problems due to their (1) cultural and teaching strategy biases, (2) failure to elicit children's true language competence, and (3) tendency to limit the ability of children to demonstrate their actual grammatic and interactional competence.

To determine if the evaluation of oral language in the social context of the natural classroom, specifically the socio-dramatic area, would provide more comprehensive information about kindergarten children's communicative competence than would standardized tests, Black conducted a study involving twelve kindergarten children. After collecting oral language samples from the children, she analyzed each for syntactic maturity and vocabulary diversity. In addition, she selected eight overgeneralizations of irregular verb, noun, and pronoun inflections from the most frequently missed items on the standardized tests and incorporated them into a "Natural Environment Interview," which she conducted immediately after the subjects had been involved in sociodramatic play. Using props from the play, Black attempted to elicit correct answers to the overgeneralizations made on the tests. She also devised descriptions of

the children's interactions to show how their interactional competency was categorized according to the standardized tests and by a researcher-developed instrument called the "Interactional Competency Checklist." The results indicated that the informal evaluation design provided more comprehensive information about the children's grammatic and interactive competence, and that that information was extensive and accurate.

Effective evaluation

Arguing that little can be learned about children's understanding of language from tests and testing settings that constrain and isolate language into "measurable behaviors," DeFord and Harste [EJ 267 031] pose the following as the central curricular question that assessment must address: "In light of what we know about language, language learning, successful language users, and written language growth and development, how are these language users performing? Observing "real language users in real language settings using real language," they continue, provides the best evaluative data.

What should teachers look and listen for as they observe children? Lilja [ED 193 645] suggests checking to determine if a child is aware of language as a means of communication serving definite purposes, can use language spontaneously, and can use nonverbal signals as well as words to communicate. Other factors to consider in evaluation are the child's use of baby talk or other "cutsy" speech patterns and the use of time, place, and thought holders, such as "ya know," with consideration of how often they are used; his or her word choice and use of sentence patterns; and his or her ability to structure ideas into clear communication units. These factors could be fashioned into a checklist and used while listening to classroom or playground interactions.

Kolczynski [ED 193 645] proposes using one of two classification systems to organize evaluation--those of M.A.K. Halliday and Jean Tough. Halliday's system for classifying language includes seven categories of language function, which define language according to its uses and the intentions of the child. They are (1) instrumental, which is used to get something, to satisfy needs or desires, or to get things done; (2) regulatory, used to control the behavior of others; (3) interactional, used to establish and define social relationships; (4) personal, used to express one's individuality and personality or feelings; (5) heuristic, used to explore the environment or acquire knowledge; (6) imaginative, used to create an environment of one's own, express fantasy, and produce poetry or imaginative writing; (7) informative, used to communicate information to others who do not already possess it.

The system devised by Tough, specifically for use during classroom activities, also delineates seven uses of language, then sets forth strategies that serve each use and reveal the child's reasons for speaking. They are as follows: (1) Self-maintaining--referring to a psychological or physical need, or a projecting of self-interest; (2) directing--monitoring one's own actions or directing the actions of the self and others; (3) reporting--referring to past or present experiences, analyzing them, extracting central meanings, and reflecting on the meanings; (4) logical reasoning--explaining a process, recognizing causal relationships, recognizing problems and solutions, and justifying actions or judgments; (5) predicting and anticipating; (6) projecting into the experiences of others; and (7) imagining--developing a situation based on real life or fantasy, or developing an original story. Tough recommends using pictures or picture books to stimulate children's discussion, which could be recorded and analyzed later. Records of what

Continued on page 12

N.C.T.E. ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS, 1984

LEEANN COX, OSHKOSH HIGH SCHOOL

Leeann's awards include high ratings in the Forensics State Tournament and in Newspa. She currently participates in forensics, the newspaper, A.F.S. and the Polaris Honors Society; LeeAnn is seeking a future vocation as a writer.

LAURA HAGEN, PARKER HIGH SCHOOL, JANESVILLE

Laura, a member of the National Honor Society, is active in Parker Playhouse, the orchestra and band, the Spanish Club, Thespians, and Grace Youth Group; she is secretary of the drama Club. An essay winner at Whitewater's Huckleberry Finn Festival and a delegate to Badger Girls' State, Laura plans to teach English or Spanish.

HOLLY HARDEN, FALL CREEK HIGH SCHOOL

President of forensics and choir, Holly is also active in drama, newspaper and yearbook, and volleyball. She has achieved awards in forensics, Badger Girls' State and scholarships to Swing Choir Camp. Vocation: to teach English/creative writing.

ELLEN JESSICA HARVEY, WHITEFISH BAY HIGH SCHOOL

A National Merit Semi-finalist, Ellen has received awards in French Concours national, Der Deutche Schulverian and drama. A member of the National Honor Society, she is active in scenery painting and design, acrylic painting, the math team and horseback riding; A.F.S. Club and Portugeuse at UW-Milwaukee.

STEVEN KLEINHENZ, MADISON WEST HIGH SCHOOL

A member of the National Honor Society, Steven is also active in varsity volleyball, the French Club, JV tennis and Cross-Grade Tutorial Program. His awards include varsity volleyball letterman and National Merit Semifinalist. Vocation: finance.

COX HAGEN HARDEN HARVEY KLEINHENZ

KRISTEN A KRATOSKA, BROOKFIELD CENTRAL

A National Merit Semi-finalist, Kristin is editor of the yearbook and is active in the drama club, forensics, soccer, track and YMCA "Teen Council." She has received awards in state and local math meets, science competitions, the academic decathlon; and state forensics.

SARAH E. MACKEY, ASHLAND HIGH SCHOOL

President of the National Honor Society, student council representative, Sarah is active on the literary magazine (editor), the newspaper and yearbook. She has served as student director of "West Side Story" and has received WHSFA awards for acting and speech. Others: concert choir, AFS, Spanish Club, Badger Girls' State. Career goal: Secondary English education.

GREG MAGARIAN, SHOREWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

Greg has received awards in writing, art and speaking (debate). Parliamentarian of

the National Honor Society, Greg is active in Student Council, the newspaper, the literary magazine, drama and Model United Nations.

SUSAN ELIZABETH MURLEY, OSHKOSH WEST HIGH SCHOOL

Co-captain of varsity tennis, Susan's activities are Student Council, Spanish Club, AFS Club, O'Neill National Honor Society, Forensics and the math team. She has received awards in creative writing and English. Vocation: medicine.

KARLA M. NELSEN, WEST HIGH SCHOOL, GREEN BAY

Karla, co-editor of the yearbook, also is active in forensics, the band, the Spanish and math clubs and school musicals; Future plans: elementary and special education.

KRATOSKA MACKEY MAGARIAN MURLEY NELSEN

ROSS SCHNEIDER SCHRAG SIMONSEN WRCHOTA

SALLY ROSS, JAMES MADISON MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL, MADISON

A National Merit semifinalist, Sally has been awarded first place in both the Shakespearean Monologue competition and in the swimming sectionals (medley relay). Other activities: musicals and plays, swing choir. Career interest: Communications.

WENDY SCHNEIDER, APPLETON HIGH SCHOOL-WEST

A National Merit Semifinalist, Wendy has also received a Spanish Speaking Award. She is in the National Honor Society and active in the pep and marching bands. Career goal: veterinarian.

STEPHANIE SCHRAG, MADISON WEST HIGH SCHOOL

Stephanie is active on the math team, the Spanish and International Clubs and the National Honor Society. She has qualified as a National Merit semi-finalist.

ANN ELIZABETH SIMONSEN, EAU CLAIRE MEMORIAL

Newspaper editor, Ann has received an Associated Press newswriting award (second place). She is a National Merit Semifinalist and was selected The Rotary Club's Youth of the Month. She is in the National Honor Society, the Orchestra and the German and International Clubs. Ann plans a nursing career.

ELLEN MARGARET WRCHOTA, ARMSTRONG HIGH SCHOOL, NEENAH

Ellen is active on the newspaper and yearbook staffs, the National Honor Society and the French Club. She has received awards in piano competition, in English/Humanities and Badger Girls State; she is a National Merit semifinalist. Career goals: medicine.

BOOKS

FOR ADOLESCENTS AND TEACHERS

Arnow, Harriet. *The Dollmaker*. New York: Macmillan, 1954 and Avon, 1972.

It is not easily accountable how some novels make it into the mainstream and stay there to be enjoyed by readers. I'm afraid that *The Dollmaker* is not one of these but it should be. It has an American as well as a human presence. A World War II story, it is not of the usual battlefields; it's about the folks at home. But the battles fought, the troubles endured are no less dramatic, no less poignant.

We are introduced to the Nevels family in Kentucky. Sharecroppers, they seem to lead a hand-to-mouth existence but the impression is of a satisfying life, imbued with simple tasks, simple joys and mutual help. Gertie, the dollmaker, dominates the family. She manages things from household tasks to farming. Clovis, her husband, hauls coal when there's coal to haul before the mines close. Gertie's strength and self-reliance are shown clearly in the book's very first episode when, unable to get to a doctor with her sick child who's having difficulty breathing, she slits open his throat and windpipe to allow him to breathe. Impressive. Gertie whittles, carving to fill time, to occupy her hands during stress, to give things to people. She makes dolls and animal creatures.

Gertie has her eye on the future, on a small brookside farm that's for sale; she saves money secretly from her husband. He has other plans. Avoiding the draft, he goes off to Detroit and gets work in a defense factory as a machine repairman. She wants to stay home. But shamed by her mother, pressured by her husband, Gertie takes her children to Detroit.

Nothing has prepared her for the trauma of this city. It's not merely unfamiliar; it's demeaning--the pushy, sneering crowds--she gets called "hillbilly" time and again, the noise, the confusion, and worst of all, the treeless, airless, elbow-to-elbow spaces. There is no privacy: the street seems to come into the apartment, the neighbors can be heard through the walls. Gertie, remembering all she's left behind, is devastated.

Against this backdrop is played the drama of Gertie's--indeed the whole family's --response to the city. Her turmoil never quite leaves her; her control and direction never quite return. Her attempts to maintain the family and her own identity are but holding actions. They're doomed against the corrosive pressures of the city, against both the values adopted by her husband and two of her children and against the piling up of debts. On this level, the book can be read as a study of adjustment and loss of helplessness, despair and victimization.

But the book goes beyond one family's odyssey, one woman's torment. The backdrop includes a cross section of the neighbors in the alley. The interplay and conflict of values lead to acts of prejudice among the adults, modeled by the children whose play is one raucous battle after another. Yet these conflicts are paralleled by acts of extraordinary giving and compassion. Same people. On this level the book portrays a passionate community of differences forced by circumstances to live together.

The Dollmaker is at once a desperate and a beautiful book. Completely compelling. Harriet Arnow writes with grace and passion. Nicholas J. Karolides, UW-RF

Brooks, Bruce. *The Moves Make the Man*. New York: Harper and Row, 1984.
Dygard, Thomas J. *Tournament Upstart*. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1984.
Kidd, Ronard. *Dunker*. New York: E.P. Dutton, Inc., 1982 and Bantam, 1984.
Myer, Walter Dean. *The Outside Shot*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1984.

These four sports books have few things in common: basketball, an almost completely closed boys' world, and drama. The differences among them are stronger.

Tournament Upstart is the straightest sports book. It has essentially one setting, the tournament scene; court and locker room. A Class B basketball team, led

by a young coach, cheered by enthusiastic townspeople, has entered the Class A tournament. It is basketball strategy and playing all the way with the added insights about the players. Understaffed to start with, they're undermined by internal friction: an unhappy transfer student who's ashamed of the small town's limitations, who yearns for big city class. The friction boils over and affects the team game. Dygard manages to bring the players to life, individualizing them and the coach; the tension is also realized so that we believe in its possibility. He also manages to put life into the detailed court action that might otherwise seem repetitious.

Dunker also frames considerable court action but life and problem of the hero take a central focus. Bobby, at sixteen, looks twelve. This gives him the needed edge as a child actor in advertisements. But the acceptance Bobby wants is among his peers and as a basketball player. Constant ball handling--he takes it everywhere, lessons and tips from a friend, give Bobby the skills and speed; he has the determination and spirit. But his parents insist his career comes first. And he has to get past his lack of height and, later, the doubts of his teammates. The last half of the book features ball games with Bobby taking the sixth man role, his scrappy ball handling and finesse helping the team to win games. Then career conflict arises; Bobby has a difficult choice, a decision about himself to make. The book holds together, despite the extraordinary circumstances.

The Outside Shot uses basketball to focus on other issues; the integration of a Harlem black into a white college situation and the temptation of gambling money. Lonnie with his street game and street smarts isn't prepared for either college classes or campus life. The less flexible ball game also almost throws him. It is, however, the local gambler's bid to use him to fix games along with another player that forces Lonnie to come to terms with his values and goals. The fact that he's black and expected to be an easier mark for corruption adds still another dimension. A secondary sequence features Lonnie's work study job at the physical therapy center working with a near-autistic nine year old. It's a neat companion angle that lets us see an interior piece of Lonnie that wouldn't otherwise show up in the sports scenes and tensions. Yet, despite the angled difference, there is correlation. This story isn't as tightly written as it could be--perhaps the author is reaching for too many shots and there may not be enough court action for the ball fan--but it still is intriguing.

The Moves Make the Man is the most psychologically complex of these books. Its central character, Jerome, lives basketball. When he's chosen as the first black to integrate the junior high school, he's ready academically. They're not ready for him, particularly the basketball coach who excludes him from the team despite his clear skill. Jerome befriends Bix, an extraordinary athlete--baseball, but the friendship is uncertain. Bix is beclouded; his emotions taut, his mind confused. Jerome teaches Bix to play basketball but the elusive trouble doesn't dissipate; his insistence on truth and straight play is overwrought. Bix's coiled-spring determination wraps around Jerome until he's a near helpless actor in a dramatic confrontation with Bix's stepfather and emotionally ill mother. Jerome's fatherless family, loving and accepting, independent yet together, offers a counterpoint. This is indeed an intense, engrossing novel. The two boys reach out for attention. The basketball sequences fall naturally into place. Nicholas J. Karolides, UW-RF

QUICK STUDY REVIEWS

Cavanna, Betty. *Wanted: A Girl for the Horses.* New York: William Morrow and Company, 1984.

Charlotte, ad odds with her family, expelled from school, answers an ad that lets her escape yet opens up a new life. Her love of horses gets her started; her mettle wins her through. Besides horsecare and races, there's a touch of romance, and a sense of loss but, at the last, new horizons.

Asher, Sandy. *Things Are Seldom What They Seem.* New York: Delacorte Press, 1983.

The surface story concerns Debbie, just entering high school, and finding friends. Her relationship with Murray, the class odd-man-out, develops into an upbeat, almost-boyfriend friendship. The interior story initiates when the school's drama coach is discovered to be making advances toward some of the girls, including Debbie's sister. The emotional involvement is intense.

SERVICE BULLETIN Nos. 29 and 40 - Indexes: *Wisconsin English Journal*/Volumes 1-15, 16-20. Compiled by Eugene Engeldinger and Barbara Stevens, UW-Eau Claire. $1 each

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 30 - Bibliography of Science Fiction. April, 1974. Compiled by Roger D. Sween UW-Platteville. An annotated listing of 300 novels, short stories, anthologies, films, and secondary sources. $1.00

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 31 - Censorship in Wisconsin Public High Schools, 1973. Lee A. Burress, UW-Stevens Point. A follow-up of his 1964 study; current censorship trends and developments related to Supreme Court decisions. 75¢

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 35 - An Annotated Bibliography of Fantasy Literature. Compiled by Robert H. Boyer and Kenneth J. Zahorski, St. Norbert College, DePere, Wis. An annotated listing of fantasy primary works, reference tools, full-length critical works, essays, magazines, associations, dealers and publishers. $1.00

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 36 - Research: Composition Teaching Methods and Purposes. "Teaching Public Written Discourse: The Blending of Communicative Effectiveness and Mechanical Correctness: by Joanne Yatvin, Crestwood School, Madison; "Writing Competencies Needed by High School Graduates" by Robert A. McKeag, UW-Oshkosh. 75¢

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 37 - Wisconsin Authors: Literary Map and Bulletin. Compiled by Duane and Maureen Roen. The map includes drawings of scenes from the lives or the books of thirty-seven major Wisconsin authors and a list of 126 adult authors and 60 juvenile authors. The bulletin also includes a wealth of biographical and bibliographic material. Many elementary or secondary titles are labeled. $3.00 plus $1.00 postage for map and bulletin ($1.00 for bulletin alone).

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 38 - Bibliography of Native American Books for Elementary Grades. April, 1979. Compiled by Maxine Burress, UW-Stevens Point. An annotated bibliography of books for children, grades K-8. Grade levels are indicated. 75¢

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 39 - Alcohol and Alcoholism in Children's Literature. Compiled by Carl Personke, UW-Madison. An annotated bibliography of books on alcohol, alcohol abuse and alcoholism. Evaluation of effectiveness is included. 60¢

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 41 - A Small Community Serves Its Gifted. April, 1981. By Monica L. Josten, South Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Including: method of selecting students, handling problems, curriculum, and results of the program. $1.00

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 42 - Elementary Children's Writing--A Study and an Approach. Beverly Nordberg, Fox Point, 1982. Discussion of criteria for evaluating children's writing and their application. Teaching suggestions offered. 75¢

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SERVICE BULLETIN No. 44 - Evaluating Student Writing. February, 1982. Nancy S. Haugen, UW-Madison. Discussion of evaluation principles and tactics with specific time saving suggestions. 75¢

SERVICE BULLETIN No. 45 - Forty Short Writing Activities. November, 1983. Jane H. Yarbrough, University of Wisconsin Center, Marinette, Wisconsin. 75¢

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